

Howard Spicer Van Alstine

ISSN 0003-4827

No known copyright restrictions.

Recommended Citation

"Howard Spicer Van Alstine." *The Annals of Iowa* 27 (1946), 249-250.

Available at: <http://ir.uiowa.edu/annals-of-iowa/vol27/iss3/17>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

NOTABLE DEATHS

HOWARD SPICER VAN ALSTINE, banker and legislator, died at the Lutheran hospital at Fort Dodge, Iowa, August 5, 1945; born at Poplar Grove, Illinois, May 16, 1869, son of Sewell Van Alstine and Ellen Hawley Van Alstine, who came to Iowa in 1870 and settled in Pocahontas county on the virgin prairie two miles northwest of the present town of Gilmore City, where Mr. Van Alstine has lived the most of his life and resided at the time of his demise. A postoffice was established at the Van Alstine farm home, known as the Blooming Prairie postoffice and the mother was named postmistress; its operation continued until after 1880 when the railroad was built and the town of Gilmore City established by the elder Van Alstine. The school opened near the farm homestead which he attended and obtained his only formal education in four terms, which he supplemented by reading and study during hours engaged in herding cattle on the prairie. In 1889 he joined with his brother, L. H. Van Alstine, in a partnership establishing the Gilmore Exchange Bank.

In 1896 Mr. Van Alstine married Mary Bertha Beers of Gilmore City, who with two sons and two daughters survive him, one son, Howard Dana Van Alstine having died in 1928. He was one of the three last survivors of the original settlers of Gilmore City. With his brother he was a leader in the movement resulting in the drainage of thousands of acres of Pocahontas county slough bottoms long before the first drainage ditch was established in the county under the provisions of law. The bank extended its financial operations throughout the county and obtained valuable eastern loan connections which was utilized in developing the wild prairie into productive farms. Later in the depth of the depression the shrinkage of deposits from a high of \$1,800,000 to \$303,000.00 occasioned the decision of the Van Alstines to close the bank and it was liquidated beginning in October 1931, the farm loan business being continued.

In addition to his local business Mr. Van Alstine was active in public affairs, his most lasting and important public work being in the Iowa legislature, serving in the senate, representing Beuna Vista, Humboldt and Pocahontas counties, in the Thirty-seventh, Thirty-eighth and Thirty-ninth General Assemblies, as chairman of the code revision committee, chairman of the appropriations and other standing committees. In 1920 he was appointed chairman of the state tax commission, which at that time carried no compensation, and he devoted a large part of his time in securing revision of tax laws and taxation practices; for many years was a member of the National Association of Tax Commissioners, and was a recognized authority on methods of taxation; in 1928 designed and drew the legislation under which

the present Iowa State Tax Commission was organized and was offered appointment as its first chairman, but declined this honor; served as president of the Iowa Farm Mortgage Banker's Association, a member of the board of directors of the Iowa Tax association and of the Pocahontas County Mutual Insurance association and president of the Iowa Pioneer Lawmakers Association.

His life was devoted to aggressive community and county development, being active in the movements that secured for Gilmore City a gas plant, which later he supplanted with an electric service in 1912, also in the organization and installation of a municipal water works. A Republican and a member of the Knights of Pythias and various Masonic bodies, and during World War I was active in government service. A son, Lieut. Sewal Van Alstine, is now with the U. S. armed forces in the Pacific area.

THOMAS A. WAY, public official, banker and businessman, died at his home in Glendale, California, September 14, 1945; born in 1860 in McDonough county, Illinois, a son of Chandler C. Way of Chester county, Pennsylvania and Georgiana Way, formerly of New York, who came to Hancock county, Iowa, in 1865 and located in Ellington township; received his education in the public schools of Hancock county and business college in Minneapolis. His father was one of the active men at Britt and Garner, as county superintendent of schools, a banker and land agent at Britt for many years. The son early was engaged in his father's enterprises, and for many years until 1900 was in varied and extensive business activities. In 1881 he was instrumental in organizing the Hancock county fair. The first fire team in Britt was organized and financed by him and for many years known as the T. A. Way Independent Hose company. About 1894 he organized the Commercial State bank at Britt, and in 1898, with the late E. P. Healy, erected the Healy-Way building that still bears his name. He served as president of the Wesley State bank in 1903 and 1904; was one of the founders of the town of Woden, and he and Mr. Healy organized the first bank there and also opened its first drug store; for a time was associated in the ownership of the *Britt Tribune* and later purchased and owned the *Britt News*. Besides extensive land and banking interests at Britt, Corwith, Wesley and Woden, he organized many independent telephone companies, which later were consolidated into the Western Electric company of which he was president and until it became a part of the Northwestern Bell system with headquarters at Mason City where Mr. Way then resided. With Sam A. Schneider and Truman A. Potter he organized the Mason City Mortgage & Loan company and was active in securing the location of the cement industry there, which has utilized the vast deposits there of limestone and shale.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.